



## **Week 1: Analyzing IEP Policies**

### **Overview**

Special education law is a daunting subject for most educators. Many teachers are concerned about how special education provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and No Child Left Behind affect their teaching. Understanding these laws and how they affect special education evaluation and accommodation is key for today's school leaders. In this assignment, you will review current literature on special education and evaluate how your school currently develops Individualized Education Programs for students with special educational needs. (Remember, your goal is not to gather information on special education students; it is to familiarize yourself with the special education policies and processes that are currently in place in your school.)

## **Rubric**

Use this rubric to guide your work.

<b>Week 1: Analyzing IEP Policies</b>	<b>Accomplished</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
<b>Part 1: KWL Charts</b>	Completes three KWL Charts in detail <b>(4 points)</b>	Completes three KWL Charts <b>(3 points)</b>	Completes two KWL Charts <b>(2 points)</b>	Completes one KWL Chart or does not complete any <b>(0 points)</b>
<b>Part 2: Analysis of Current State</b>	Completes all 5 responses using a minimum of 1 paragraph for each <b>(5 points)</b>	Completes all 5 responses; not all responses are a paragraph in length <b>(4 points)</b>	Completes less than 5 responses <b>(3 points)</b>	Does not complete any responses <b>(0 points)</b>
<b>Mechanics</b>	No or few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. <b>(1 point)</b>			Responses lack clarity and depth and/or have multiple errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. <b>(0 points)</b>

## Part 1: KWL Charts

Fill out all three KWL charts. Use the following statements to guide your entries **for each topic listed at the top of the chart:**

- What I know about topics related to special education.
- What I want to know about special education to better serve students and teachers.
- What I learned from these articles that will help me in my educational setting.

Special Education Eligibility and Evaluation		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students must perform 2 grade levels below their IQ to “labeled”</li> <li>• ADD qualifies as special ed</li> <li>• Speech qualifies a student as spec ed</li> <li>• Students must have an IEP (individual education plan) to aid in their modifications for the teachers who are associated with student.</li> <li>• Confidentiality is a key component</li> <li>• Students must meet their time requirements for “pull out” classes</li> <li>• Parents may request testing</li> <li>• Parents must give permission for testing</li> <li>• There are many different levels in special education from students who are profoundly disabled to students with speech difficulties (wide range of</li> <li>• Accommodations</li> <li>• Under 504: least restrictive environment</li> <li>• Students with all types of disabilities are to stay in the classroom as much as possible with as little</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do the tests look like that children take that determines special education status?</li> <li>• Are the tests up to date with current curriculum requirements?</li> <li>• Do the tests use working like what is on current TAKS testing and required by TEKS?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTI is a requirement. It is not just a program developed by my district but is required for intervention before special education testing is considered.</li> <li>• Martinez, R. S., Nellis, L. M., &amp; Prendergast, K. A., (2006). <i>Closing the achievement gap series, part II: Response to intervention (RTI) - Basic elements, practical application, and policy recommendations</i>. Education Policy Brief, 4(8), Center for Evaluation and Education</li> <li>• page 2 each state was given jurisdiction to operationalize procedures for determining a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability</li> <li>• Page 3 Commission emphasized               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A focus on results, not just process</li> <li>○ B Embrace a model of prevention, not a model of failure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

interruption in their day being pulled out of homeroom class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ C Consider children with disabilities as general education children first</li></ul>
--	--	---

IEP Components		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States where student is able to be successful.</li> <li>Functional performance</li> <li>Goals that teachers and students can measure</li> <li>How the goals will be measured</li> <li>Services being provided</li> <li>How the child can participate in a regular classroom environment.</li> <li>Can have a BIP (behavior intervention plan)</li> <li>How the child will graduate or terminate their special education services</li> <li>Must be evaluated yearly</li> <li>If something is stated on the IEP, the teacher must accommodate those needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some alternative measureable goals?</li> <li>How is it determined if a child can participate in a regular classroom environment?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Law does not require short term goals for preschool only annual goals</li> <li>Mediation is a procedural safeguard</li> <li>Complaints must be filed within 2 years</li> <li>Ketterlin-Geller, L. R., Alonso, J., Brown-Monegan, J., &amp; Tindal, G. (2007).</li> <li>Recommendations for accommodations: Implications of (in)consistency. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i>, 28(4), 194-206.</li> <li>A. information about the students' level of educational performance</li> <li>B a description of the way in which the students' disabilities adversely affect their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum</li> <li>C an outline of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals</li> <li>D a statement indicating how annual goals will be measured and when reports will be provided</li> <li>E an explanation of necessary educational services, including dates of commencement, duration and frequency</li> </ul>

		<p>of services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• F special information about accommodations and modification in curriculum, instruction , and assessment to which students are entitled</li></ul>
--	--	---

--	--	--

Implementing the IEP		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a daily plan</li> <li>Put the plan into practice</li> <li>Review and revise regularly</li> <li>Evaluate at year end</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there one part of an IEP that is more important than the others?</li> <li>If a part of an IEP is not working, how do teachers get it revised without having to have an ARD?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From Hyatt, K. J. (2007). The new IDEA: Changes, concerns and questions. <i>Intervention in School and Clinic</i>, 42(3), 134 students who graduate or are exited due to age must be provided with a written summary of academic and functional skills that includes recommendations for assisting the student with post secondary goals</li> <li>IEP can reconvene to address educational components ex: if student is removed from classroom for more than 10 days IEP must meet to determine updated IEP goals within 10 days</li> <li>Under FAPE (lecture notes from week 1)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a district is not violating FAPE if a student is progressing from grade to grade, and</li> <li>2) the purpose of the act is to provide access to education, not to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## **Part 2: Analysis of Current State**

The second part of your assignment requires you to seek information from your school's special education coordinator or a teacher familiar with the IEP process. Begin by printing out your state's IEP document, which is located in the Resource section of this course. Use this form to develop questions about the procedures your school uses in identifying, evaluating, and accommodating special education students. Then, answer the following questions after contacting staff members at your school who are knowledgeable in special education.

Each response needs to be a minimum of one paragraph. Type your responses in the expandable boxes below.

### **Response #1**

How do school staff members feel about the IEP process as a whole? Is it stressful? Do they feel it represents a true collaboration between parents and staff members to best serve students?

Most of the special education teachers I spoke with did not find the IEP process stressful. The only part they found to be the most taxing was all the data and documentation. They spend more time on the assessing to create a data rich environment and the teachers wanted more time to spend with actually implementing with the students who need the assistance. The paperwork in other words is taking up valuable time that could be spent working with the children.

One of the special education teachers I spoke with discussed how it is wonderful to collaborate with the parents. She stated that often the parents have their own perspective on their children which is beneficial.

### **Response #2**

Which aspect of the IEP process most confuses or discourages team members?

One teacher thought the most confusing and discouraging part of the IEP process was actual communication between special education teachers and classroom teachers in the implementation of IEP goals. With the special education teachers having a full schedule they do not have the time available to work with the "classroom" teachers. Those teachers often can misinterpret IEPs or don't know how to effectively implement the IEPs. Better communication between special education staff members and classroom teachers would be a beneficial aspect of the IEP process. Special education teachers need to be a part of classroom teachers' team meetings to help understand lessons and assignments being completed. Classroom teachers need to know ways and strategies to implement IEP goals with special education students who are placed in their classrooms.

### **Response #3**

How does your school/district determine whether students are eligible for special education?

The whole process begins with the Student Support Team (SST) committee in our district. This team is designed to help teachers before they refer a student for special education testing. During the SST meeting, the team begins the process of RTI. The team is made up of special education teachers and teachers with expertise in different areas. They brainstorm other ideas before a referral is necessary. They give intervention strategies to use with the child to

determine if a referral for special education testing is necessary. RTI is an official program. The RTI was needed because too many students were being referred for special education testing. After strategies are determined, then the teacher returns to the committee if additional assistance is required. Committee then determines if a special education referral is necessary. If testing is necessary, they determine areas to target for testing. Then the student receives a complete evaluation. Psychological is also considered. It is determined what assessments are needed: referred to diagnostician for academic and IQ, referred to psychologist for behavioral and IQ, and possibly an autism expert. Once testing is completed and referral is determined and paperwork continues for student. Once testing is completed, parents and committee members have an ARD to discuss findings and decide on the special education services required for the student.

#### **Response #4**

What do IEP team members say can be done to better improve the process?

The biggest area for improvement is in efficient data collection. Team members find that too much repetition is found throughout all the paperwork required for special education students. The team would prefer everything to be more concise. Team members found that the threat of litigation was behind the amount of repetitive data collection. They found that the paperwork requires many categories to be addressed that do not concern each student. But, due to possibility of litigation, they must document every area even if there is not seen need in those areas.

#### **Response #5**

Are students' IEPs effectively implemented at your school? What can be done to improve implementation?

Team members thought that IEPs were definitely implemented correctly at our school. They felt that there has been a huge improvement in serving the children. The district and school do try to follow the letter of the law. One interviewed team member thought that in the past some students who looked different in our affluent district would not look different in other districts. Those students previously were incorrectly placed in special education. Now, in recent years the district and school has conformed to a standard. Due to RTI, fewer students are placed with special education services. The RTI has truly helped with making interventions, not just in our district, but statewide.

To help in implementation, teachers need a variety of help in understanding strategies to work with their identified special education students. Training would help teachers to understand their students and make the process of working with students with special needs less daunting and more fulfilling.